

19th January 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Carers,

Consultation on Assessment of A-Levels and GCSEs in 2021

We have all known for some time that there will not be conventional A-level and GCSE exams in the summer of 2021. The Government has begun to work out what will take their place and it has now put out an outline for public discussion.

Everyone who has a stake in this year's A-levels and GCSEs has been invited to contribute their opinion. The opportunity to do this closes on Friday, 29th January.

The Government's proposal is only an outline, but it adds up to a document over 40 pages long. Along with it the Government has published some 60 questions, each one inviting a response to a particular aspect of the proposals. You will find both the proposal and the questions at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021>

Studying a proposal of this size with the care that it deserves is no small task. I did ask myself whether there might be a bigger response if I reduced the Government's publication to a much shorter list of key issues. But any summary that I made would tend to steer your interests and responses in a certain direction, try though I would to be even-handed. What I will do, however, is to give you a starting point by listing just 10 major features of the proposal. To play a helpful part in the national consultation you do need to follow up each of these headlines by reading the Government's own material.

1. This scheme does involve some assessment by teachers, but it is very different from the one used last summer.
2. Grades are awarded on what candidates actually know, understand and can do, rather than on what they would have been able to achieve had there not been a pandemic.
3. Exam boards will provide question papers which may – or must – be used by schools. They will be marked by teachers in the school.
4. For each candidate in each subject a dossier of information will be assembled. The marked exam paper (see No. 3) will be an important part of this, probably the main part.
5. The dossier could also include other work, such as a marked mock paper.
6. Taking the dossier as a whole, the teacher will propose an overall grade. Training will be given as to how this should be done.
7. Exam boards will check on the methods which schools are using to reach their decisions. They will also sample individual dossiers.

8. Once the exam board is satisfied, candidates will be told their grades. If a candidate believes their work has been graded wrongly, they may appeal.
9. The school will then appoint an independent person to reassess the dossier concerned. This may result in the grade going up or down.
10. A further appeal would also be possible. This would be to the exam board and would not involve the individual candidate's dossier of work, but a check on whether the school had followed the correct procedures throughout.

I trust this brief summary, which is really no more than a set of 10 headlines, is enough to show you that this is a complex and intricate proposal. I hope that you will find the time to follow it up and to take this chance of letting the Government know what you think about it.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Waters